PANDIT

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

(A Study at Close Quarters)

BY

SRIVATSA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has a unique record of service and sacrifice in the cause of India. In spite of differences of opinion over his approach to current economic and political problems of the country, none can doubt his sincerity, courage of conviction, determination and selfless spirit of service, or the fact that the people hold him in great respect and love.

Pandit Jawaharlal, as man and leader, has rare qualities, and a study of him at close quarters is bound to be interesting. This book is a pen picture of the Pandit by a journalist who had the opportunity to move and work with him during one of his strenuous propaganda tours.

MADRAS. *Dec. 18, 1936.*



By Courtesy—The Hindu

I

THE MAN

1918—the heyday of Pandit Motilal Nehru's career.

Sedate and majestic, Motilal stood, delivering his presidential address to the Political Conference of the United Provinces at Lucknow. The mantle of leadership was falling on his shoulders at a time when the country was beginning to doubt the *bona fides* of the British and their professed desire to help India 'in the progressive realisation of responsible self-government'. Several events had contributed to strengthen the growing misgivings in the minds of the people. Nor did the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals for Indian Constitutional reform tend to allay these feelings.

A solemn silence pervaded the Conference hall as the House was listening, in rapt attention, to Pandit Motilal. The Pandit gave expression to his distress and disappointment at the doings of the British Raj, but his faith in its *bona fides* seemed to abide.

His advice to his countrymen was that they should continue to place faith in the Britishers.

The stillness of the House was suddenly broken by a solitary dissenting note "Question". The House was taken aback and Pandit Motilal paused.

"'Question', Who questions me?" he asked in surprise and in anger.

"Question", again came forth from the same quarter and people turned round and saw a well-dressed youth, who had scarcely passed his boyhood, sitting calmly.

THE COMING MAN.

Some in the gathering had seen this youth, with sparkling eyes and refined features, flitting about in political gatherings; others had heard some of his fervent speeches. But few guessed that he was the coming man!

That was Jawaharlal Nehru.

Eighteen years later he was there, again in Lucknow, presiding for the second time over a session of the Indian National Congress. How few of those assembled there recalled this incident so typical of his impetuosity, single-mindedness, and courage of conviction!

To the father it was perhaps the first of such trying experiences, but, surely, it was not the last. Often, like the skilful rider trying to break a spirited horse, Pandit Motilal tried his utmost to curb his son's impetuosity. But it was the father who, while resisting, was carried gently forward by the son's radicalism.

Motilal Nehru was a great and gallant fighter, but he was of a different school from his son's.

MORE RADICAL THAN OTHERS

"Nehru", Prof. Harold J. Laski says referring to Pandit Jawaharlal, "is a much more radical person than his father could ever have been. Where his father was gentle, compromising, patient, he is stern, unbending, ardent for immediate action". Jawaharlal is more radical not only than his father but most others of his generation.

After receiving education at Harrow and Cambridge, Pandit Jawaharlal was called to the Bar from Inner Temple, and, when he returned to India in June 1912, he was more English than Indian. All that a discerning father's solicitude, and all that wealth and influence could ever give, Jawa-

harlal had in a rich measure. He returned to India, well educated, brimming with ideas, rich in experience gathered in free countries and, above all, with the spirit and daring of a leader of men. It was not long before he began to smart under the restraints in India.

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IN THE FRONT RANK

Times changed rapidly and events in India moved fast. Great movements flowed and ebbed. India was in a ferment, and ardent Jawaharlal gave up practice and threw himself heart and soul into the struggle.

By dint of service and sacrifice he soon earned a place in the front rank of Indian leaders. At a time when the country was facing a great crisis, what with severe repression on the one hand and dissensions between the advocates of Independence and Dominion Status within the Congress and the general gloom and despair at the outlook of the future on the other, the people showed great confidence in Jawaharlal by electing him president of the Lahore session of the Congress in 1928.

The Congress was in a cauldron in

Lahore, says Dr. Pattabhi Seetharamayya in his *History of the Congress*. And 'ideas and ideals were boiling on the fires of national patriotism kindled by ever-increasing arrests'. Changing the metaphor, he says further, 'We knew we had a rough voyage ahead. The bark was frail, the seas were boisterous, the clouds were overhanging, there was fog all round and the sailors were undisciplined and new to their work'.

Mahatma Gandhi saw the wisdom of installing in the *gadi* of the Congress a younger man, and of placing the engine of the Congress in the hands of someone full of enthusiasm, daring and confidence, 'though the brakes should be in charge of older and more seasoned and sedate politicians'.

Jawaharlal was the youngest of Congress presidents, barring Gokhale. In eight years he had the rare honour of presiding a second time over the Congress. And in his re-election to that dignity again this year, he has equalled Dadabhai Naoroji's record of thrice being Congress President. The only other leader who had the honour that is now Jawaharlal's—of being President for

consecutive years—was Rash Behari Ghose.

What the Bar lost, Indian politics gained.

* * *

PERIOD OF MOULDING

The earlier years of Pandit Jawaharlal's political career were at once a period of training and of achievement. They were years of suffering and sacrifice. Pandit Jawaharlal went through this period with one foot in the Jail. It was a period of moulding for him. Varied experiences and influences gradually shaped him into a fine man, a determined leader and a clear thinker. Simple, even ascetic, clear, precise and logical in his ideas, ready, straight and spirited in his speech, uncompromising and determined in his approach to problems, sincere and selfless, Jawaharlal brought a rare combination of qualities into his work. A powerful intellect, culture and wide learning were blended with an intensely burning patriotism and an ardent desire to serve the masses. Some describe him as a doctrinaire and say that 'the touch of the universal and of detachment in his intellectual make-up, constitutes his main attraction and, at the same time, explains the hesitation

with which the average Congress politician is apt to regard him'.

Pandit Jawaharlal is in advance of his times or, at any rate, of most of his political colleagues. In surveying the Pandit's character and position, a writer says, 'One cannot but admire and pity him; admire his qualities, intellectual and spiritual, and pity him for the role in which he has been cast—to apply methods he dislikes, with associates who misunderstand, for purposes not fully shared'. Perhaps, this view is not altogether wrong. Great men in the Congress, aye, his own father and Mahatma Gandhi whose favourite *chela* he is, have been known to hold views considerably at variance with Jawaharlal's.

INDEPENDENCE AND SOCIALISM

The Pandit is a passionate advocate of Indian Independence and strives to unite all national forces on 'an anti-imperialist front.' To him 'Independence is first and foremost' and even Socialism—his heart is in the latter—takes its place only next.

Development of mass contact, and freeing Congress of all authoritarianism, thus enabling it to function on the most

democratic lines, are his means of promoting the national struggle of India.

Terribly earnest, transparently sincere, Jawaharlal impresses all in spite of his limitations. A warm heart for his fellow-men, and a sensitive one for his country's lot have made him, like Gandhiji, ever think of the masses.

The Pandit never spares political opponents. He is harsh and bitter, sometime apparently offensive. It may be that he expresses his criticism with avoidable warmth and vigour of language, but this only shows the spirit of the man which is passionately yearning for freedom and is impatient of unnecessary opposition.

AN OUTSTANDING LEADER

Mr. Sachidananda Sinha, who has watched Jawaharlal's career from boyhood, says of him: "He is by common consent an outstanding leader amongst the newer generation of Indians". He adds. "As a political leader, he is forceful, vigorous, outspoken, dynamic and unyielding, a man of unbending determination, of strong convictions and, therefore, unwilling to compromise. Naturally, with such traits, he has the

defect of his qualities, and sometimes his political opponents complain of his betraying a spirit of unreasonableness and occasional offensiveness in speech and writing against them. Certain it is that those who expect any notable degree of sweet reasonableness in political controversies with Jawaharlal are likely to be disappointed. But, for all that, those who intimately know him have been impressed not only with his utter unselfishness and spirit of tremendous sacrifice but also with his innate geniality and urbanity in private relations and with his possessing the true characteristics of a gentleman."

Lord Willingdon's description of Mr. Nehru as 'a great gentleman, perfectly straightforward' is sufficient answer to those who feel inclined to examine his manners with a microscope.

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Twenty-five years ago, young Jawaharlal took his place at the Bar and in public life with a magnificent vista before him, with the splendour and luxury ensured by his father's wealth and with all the comfort and happiness of a loving and cultured family circle. In the course of the twenty-five

years, these material splendours faded away. Little by little, the domestic circle narrowed. The princely household in *Anand Bhavan* fell off, giving place to the solemn and still shrine dedicated to Swaraj, the spirit of the Nehrus pervading its innermost sanctum. And to-day Pandit Jawaharlal stands almost alone, an exemplar of that spirit.

SOLACE OF WORK

"I feel a little lonely. Many a dear comrade and friend has left us, worn out long before the normal length of our earthly days by the stress and strain of conflict. One by one they go, leaving a void in our hearts and a dull misery in our minds—I am aweary and I have come like a tired child yearning for solace in the bosom of our common mother, India". How pathetic, how natural, how human is the cry that went forth from this anguished heart from the presidential *gadi* at Lucknow!

Solace? Yes—the solace of work, of more work, of restless work, 'We cannot rest', Jawaharlal says, 'for rest is betrayal of those who have gone, and, in going, handed the torch of freedom for us to keep

alight; it is betrayal of the cause we have espoused and the pledge we have taken; it is betrayal of the millions who never rest'.

And there Jawaharlal is deriving what solace he can from work—and he can work as few others can—wandering from Kedarnath to Ramnath, from Dwaraknath to Jagannath—a pilgrim, carrying the message of freedom to the millions of this land.

II

HIS MESSAGE

WAR, through the ages, has been the releaser of new forces that have shaped the progress of humanity. The Napoleonic Wars were the birth-throes of nineteenth century Liberalism; they ushered in the dominance of the middle class in politics and public affairs. Similarly, the Great War released fresh forces which strengthened Socialistic ideas and the 'cooperative' instead of the 'competitive' principle in human relations.

Pandit Jawaharlal is a Socialist—he prefers that description to 'Communist'. His analysis of the world's problems is the

Socialist analysis. Socialism, in his opinion, offers the best solution of all the world's problems. No one of them, he believes, can be solved unless it is properly understood; this proper understanding is not possible without a correct perspective. The correct perspective, he says, is to view current problems in their world setting.

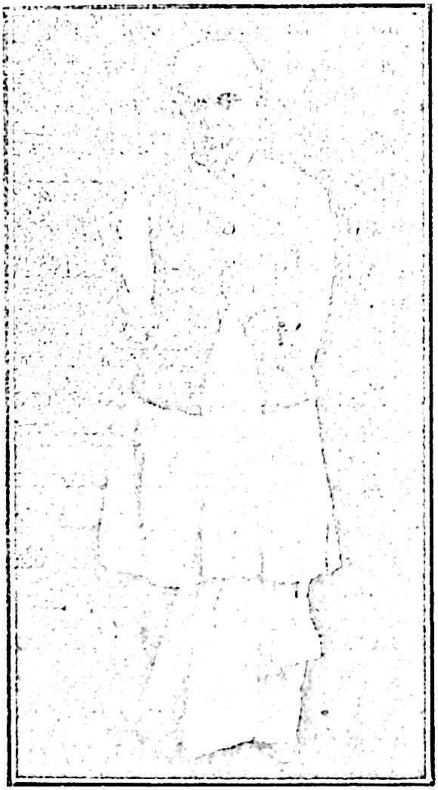
CONFLICT OF IDEAS

Everywhere the post-war period witnessed numerous conflicts between old and new ideas, ideas such as Imperialism, Fascism and Democracy. Pandit Jawaharlal's attitude to these conflicts is summed up in these, his own words :

> "Fascism and Imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the new decaying capitalism, and though they varied in different couutries according to national characteristics and economic and political conditions, they represented the same forces of reaction and supported each other, and, at the same time, came into conflict with each other, for such conflict was inherent in their very nature.
>
> "Thus we see the world divided up into vast groups to-day, the Imperialist and Fascist on one side, the Socialist and the Nationalist on the other. There is some overlapping of the two and the line between them is difficult to draw for there is mutual conflict between the Fascist and Imperialist

Powers and the nationalism of subject countries has sometimes a tendency to Fascism. But the main division holds, and, if we keep it in mind it will be easier for us to understand world conditions and our own place in them".

To Pandit Jawaharlal, Socialism is something more than a mere economic doctrine. It is a philosophy of life. "I see", he says, "no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, and the degradation of the Indian people except through Socialism."



By Courtesy—The Madras Mail

NO BLIND IMITATION

He does not believe in, much less does

he advocate, blind imitation of the methods adopted in Russia to achieve a Socialistic State. Such imitation, he says, is not the Socialistic way. Warning enthusiasts in India against such 'blind bigotry' he emphasises that the manner of the application of Socialism to India, the speed of its application and the measures for its application will, however, have to depend on Indian conditions. They will have to depend on Indian industrial conditions, Indian land conditions, Indian educational conditions, Indian cultural conditions and, to some extent, on what may be called the genius of the Indian people.

SOCIALISM AND THE CONGRESS

Socialism, it seems to him, does not fit in with the ideology of the Indian National Congress, but, in spite of his earnest desire for Socialism, he will not force the issue and thereby create difficulties in the way of the struggle for Swaraj. He feels that it should be possible for all who believe in Swaraj, nay it would be their duty, to join ranks, even though they might differ on the issue of Socialism. They have, he remarks,to combine Socialism and National-

ism. 'Both like political independence, but Nationalism, more or less, stops there, while Socialism wants to go ahead. Socialism, if it is wise, presses forward with its ideas and turns Nationalism in its direction. At the same time it does not combat with Nationalism because the first tremendous step is common to both.'

THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

Communalism has been the bane of Indian public life and strenuous attempts have been made from time to time to get rid of the evil. But, like the hydra, it rears its head again and again.

Pandit Jawaharlal thinks that the Communal problem is a bogus problem and that 'it is the creation of interested men at the top, who live in hope of office, patronage and seats in Councils, and does not affect the masses.' Though he is not 'enamoured' of the past Congress policy in regard to this problem and the attempts of the Congress to bring about pacts and compromises, yet he believes that that policy is based on sound instinct. The real solution of the problem, he is convinced, will only come 'when economic issues affecting

all religious groups and cutting across communal boundaries arise'.

The Pandit refuses to 'get excited over this communal issue, important as it is temporarily,' for, in his view, 'it is after all a side issue and it can have no real importance in the larger scheme of things.'

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

Jawaharlal is essentially scientific and rationalistic in his attitude to most questions. Once, a Socialist expressed surprise that Jawaharlal did not preach against religion, notwithstanding that he was known to be a Socialist. To that criticism Jawaharlal's answer was clear and straight. Socialism and religion—by religion he meant religion in its higher and truer sense—were not antagonistic. If, on the other hand, religion meant a certain set of dogmas, then, Socialism—which was scientific and not dogmatic—was opposed to religion.

NEW GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT

The new Government of India Act has been strongly criticised. Pandit Jawaharlal considers it to be an even more retrograde measure than that visualised in the White Paper; and having rejected the latter, In-

dians cannot, he suggests, have anything to do with this Act.

The test he applies to any Constitution is the measure of good it can do to the people and not the perfection of its legal make-up. Judged by this standard, he says, this Constitution has failed. Congressmen having 'rejected' this Constitution, for them 'to accept office and Ministry under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned...it would inevitably mean our co-operation, in some measure, with the repressive apparatus of Imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people'.

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

He urges Congressmen to contest elections on an economic and political programme with the demand for a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise in the forefront. 'Such an assembly, in order to be fruitful, must,' he contends, 'have previous thought behind it and a definite scheme put forward by an organized group. The actual details as to how to convene it must depend on the then

prevailing circumstances, but it will be our function, as the Congress, to know exactly what we are after, to place that scheme clearly and definitely before the Assembly, and to press for its acceptance.'

He warns Congressmen against the danger of toning down their programme and policy in order to win over hesitating and compromising groups and individuals. 'For, if we compromise on principles,' he declares, 'we shall fall between two stools and deserve our fall. The only right way, the only safe way, is to stand foursquare on our programme and to compromise with no one who has opposed the national struggle for freedom in the past.'

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Rapid industrialisation is a need of the country and the Pandit believes that this is the best method of combating poverty and of raising the standard of life of the people. He feels that the Khadi and Village Industries programmes of the Congress have a definite place in the present economy of the nation. He looks upon them, however, more as 'temporary expedients of a transition stage than as solutions of our vital

problems. That transition might be a long one, and in a country like India, village industries might well play an important, though subsidiary role, even after the achievement of industrialisation.'

UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability is one of our ugliest social evils, but its eradiction does not present any difficulty to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. For, Socialist that he is, he firmly holds the opinion that under Socialism 'there can be no such differentiation or victimisation. Economically, the Harijans have constituted the landless proletariat and an economic solution removes the social barriers that custom and tradition have raised.'

PANCHAYAT RAJ

The Swaraj he wants for India is a Panchayat Raj in which all people in the country, not only a few at the top or the middle, will be equal sharers irrespective of caste, creed, community or sex. Swaraj and Independence are, to him, but means to an end, not the end itself; the end is the removal of poverty and the promotion of a state of affairs wherein people will be enabled to lead good lives.

ROLE OF WOMEN

Women have an important part to play in this work.

> To them he says:—" In India the people are somewhat overwhelmed by the political struggle. So far as women are concerned, they could not entirely think of the political problem. They have to think also of their own disabilities. Whilst they have to share with men in the struggle for political freedom, they will have to bear the whole burden of the struggle for their emancipation. Individuals might sympathise with them and help them, but still theirs will be the task of fighting, not no much perhaps actual opposition, though of that there will be enough—but tremendous inertia which is far more dangerous."

But he warns them against the danger of forgetting the political struggle in their desire to fight against their own disabilities.

LINGUA FRANCA FOR INDIA

A common language is the greatest factor in promoting a sense of unity in a people. Hindi bids fair to be the common language of India. Jawaharlal says Hindi is the language of about two-thirds of India's population. There is no distinction between Hindi and Urdu except in script. There need be no quarrel over the script,

in view of the safeguard provided by the Karachi Congress resolution.

Hindustani—he prefers that nomenclature—is essential as 'the linguistic link' for all India, and learning Hindi need not, in his opinion, mean the subordination of the mother-tongue. He sees no conflict between the spread of Hindi and the promotion of provincial languages.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

Municipal and local self-governing institutions were intended to train Indians in the art of self-government, but of very few of these could it be said they have fulfilled expectations. Pandit Jawaharlal thinks they occupy an anomalous position.

And, his opinions on this subject are based on actual experience; for he rendered valuable service to the Allahabad Municipality as its President, earning the appreciation even of very fastidious critics.

> "On the one side there is a certain democratic element and on the other, an authoritarian element—high Government officials sitting on the top and issuing mandates, commands and criticisms and the like—the result being that the Municipal Councils are neither responsible to the electorate, nor are they wholly a department of

Government. They have neither the efficiency of a bureaucratic department nor the responsible urge and the drive of a democratic institution. The only remedy is the development of civic spirit and education of the people and the resultant pressure of public opinion," he says.

He welcomes the great opportunities in local bodies for learning lessons for 'the larger work of the nation.'

'In the development of municipal activity,' he says, 'one would find in the public services a supersession of private rights; for the more the public ownership of services and rights' the better it is for the municipalities and citizens. Our Municipalities in India, the small and big ones, are limited in their outlook. It may be so, but we should not forget the larger ideal. Municipal work is a growing idea, and if we apply it to national work, what is it then? It is socialisation of production and ownership of property. Some Municipal Councillors may be surprised to learn that municipalisation is Socialism. Many now think that Socialism is a dangerous doctrine, but it is the development of the idea of municipalisation on a national scale. I submit that it is an inevitable and rightful development that must take place for the betterment of humanity'.

VALUE OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline is a *sine qua non* for any organised political work. And, without dis-

cipline little, could be achieved in the fight for Swaraj; even if anything be achieved, without discipline it could not be retained. 'The wonderful enthusiasm and the overpowering affection for the Congress in the country ', he urges, should be disciplined and organised and this energy and vitality should be harnessed to the cause of the Congress and of India's freedom.

His appeal to Congressmen is to make the Congress purely democratic, a 'mirror of all the nation's strength, aye, of their weakness, too, ' and rid it of all authoritarianism. The Congress, he pleads, should be not only 'for the masses, but of the masses'. And to this end, he suggests that it should develop contact with the masses by organizing them as producers, affiliating their organizations, inviting their cooperation in the struggle for freedom, encouraging the formation of peasant bodies and workers' unions and otherwise identifying itself with the economic struggle of the masses; for, such identification will, he thinks, bring them nearer to each other and take both nearer to freedom.

He has profound faith in the high ideals of the Congress.

> 'Let us not', he exhorts Congressmen, 'lower our ideals whatever happens.' 'It may be that 'many of us must suffer still and die, so that India may live and be free. The promised land may yet be far from us and we may have to march wearily through the deserts, but who will take away from us that deathless hope which has survived the scaffold and immeasurable suffering and sorrow; who will dare to crush the spirit of India which has found rebirth again and again after so many crucifixions.'

This is his message.

III

AT CLOSE QUARTERS

IT was nearing dawn. A drizzle had set in an hour before, and a chill wind was blowing from the extensive irrigated paddy fields of the delta. It was hardly the hour to stay out-door. But the young and old in the large crowd on the village maidan remained glued to their places. Children nestled closer in their mothers' bosoms, and the mothers, hugging them closer, cast their eyes towards the distant bend in the road. The crowd was tired and it was sleepy, for

the vigil had been long and trying; but few would leave without seeing the President of the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal.

For ten long hours the crowd had waited. The khaddar-clad volunteer at his post drowsily leaned on his long *dand*, hoping that the patience of the crowd would not go unrewarded. Suddenly, he looked up and pricked his ears. Was it the distant hoot of a motor-car or was it the squawk of the first bird announcing the coming of the dawn?

There was a stir in the crowd. A joyous shout *Gandhi-ki-Jai* burst forth as the headlights of a car appeared at the distant turning of the road. One, two, three, four—the cars of the President's party came up one after another. In less than five minutes Jawaharlal was in the midst of the surging crowd.

Gandhi-ki-Jai, cheered the crowd—the name did not matter; for *Gandhi-ki-Jai* is but the rallying cry in the nation's onward march.

GETTING THROUGH CROWDS

Covered with dust, but without a sign of weariness despite the twenty-two hour

day, Jawaharlal moved slowly through the pressing crowd. The volunteers tried to clear the way for him and formed a cordon round him. But he discarded their assistance. He has his own method of getting through crowds, and the densest crowds do not deter him. So, he stood still for a minute, measured with his eye the distance to the platform, from where he was to address the gathering, and before one could guess what he would do, darted forward and ran through the crowd to the dais. The pressing, jostling crowd opened out, leaving clear a passage for him. In a few seconds he was on the dais and smiling, with joined hands making a *pranam* to the crowd as they sent up a tremendous cheer. Policemen, volunteers and others who had accompanied the Pandit were left far behind—and it was only ten minutes afterwards that they reached the platform, panting and heaving after their trying experience of getting through the crowd.

For half an hour the gathering listened in rapt attention to the President's message.

HUMAN PERSONALITY

As he was leaving the meeting-place the crowd closed round him and his vehicle, un-

willing to let him go so soon and yet reluctant to deny him the short rest he might still snatch before morning. Jawaharlal seemed to guess their thoughts, and getting down from the car walked some yards with the crowd.

An old man with a venerable beard was looking eagerly at the Pandit, and Jawaharlal advanced towards him. The old man reverentially touched the Pandit's hands, seemed pleased and fell back. Jawaharlal gave him one of the garlands presented to him. A glow of delight overspread the old man's wrinkled face.

Jawaharlal left behind the impression of a strong but very 'human' personality.

* * *

AMIDST RURAL FOLK

Few who travel through an Indian village will fail to carry the impression of its appalling poverty. The village that had been the centre of all life and activity in India through the ages, is now in decadence; what once constituted India's strength has now become one of its main problems.

In a predominantly agricultural country like India, with about three-fourths of

its population living by and occupied in agriculture, the village, in spite of its decadence, continues to be the nerve centre still. No doubt, the pulse beats weak and the blood courses low, but there is life, and while there is life there is hope. Who knows, the village may still come into its own and the neglected and the cast-off may yet live to see the day of redemption!

The strength of the Congress to-day is more in the villages than in the towns and cities. Sixteen years ago, under Gandhiji's lead, the Indian National Congress took a great step as a result of which it became a powerful democratic organization in close touch with the villages and the poorer classes of the people. From an institution representing the 'intelligentsia' alone, it developed into one representing the classes and the masses of the Indian people, both in the city and the village, the rich as well as the poor. The direction of its growth and development has been towards the village, and its object has been to make it the true embodiment of the nation's 'strength and weakness, sufferings and sacrifice, hopes and endeavours' and to base it on the widest-possible mass foundations.

VILLAGE SCENE

In recent years this effort to cultivate 'mass contact' has received a tremendous stimulus, thanks to the campaigns for Harijan uplift and revival of village industries inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi.

Jawaharlal, in his extensive tours, has done yeoman service to the Congress in awakening the rural folk, and cultivating mass contact by conveying to them its message, with his characteristic fervour and his personal appeal.

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It was a remote village in the centre of an once rich area of cultivated land in South India. The fate that had overtaken lakhs of villages had not spared this one, and the blight was noticeable in every part of this once prosperous and beautiful place. The old *Panchayat Ghar*, the shrine of the corporate life of the village, was in ruins. It was symbolic of the ruin of the village. But the ancient, majestic, *peepul* still reared its head, sighing in the wind its regrets for past glory. The platform of earth and stone at its foot was overgrown with bush and bramble from long disuse. A lean and lanky buffalo was wallowing in a puddle near by and

a herd of miserable looking cows were standing idly near a hay-stack by the road.

A group of villagers, peasants, workers, artisans, ragged unkempt and ill-nourished, had assembled under the tree. The group sat in perfect order and cheered the Congress president lustily as he arrived. For, did he not bring into their wearied life a ray of hope and solace? And what was more, did he not feel pained and distressed at their poverty and misery and strive to find a remedy? He brought sympathy and solace; nothing else mattered for them.

Jawaharlal spoke to them, standing on a large-sized stone under the tree, in feeling terms of their poverty and helplessness, and delivered to them the message of the Congress. As the Pandit rose to bid them good-bye, the village *Mukhiya* stepped forward with a rose garland and placed it round the Pandit's neck. Another man came forward, probably the village *Pujari*. He hailed the Pandit as *Bharata Samrajya Samrat*, and, getting into a poetic vein, piled titles on the Pandit. Jawaharlal seemed inclined to laugh, but he would not. No one who observed the

simplicity and sincerety of these rustic folk could be guilty of such utter lack of consideration.

REFINED SPIRIT

More than one villager presented *Thambula* and *Karpura harati* to the Pandit or sought to touch his feet or prostrate before him. His heart was touched by such tokens of regard. But one who has known him at close quarters would not fail to notice that the refined spirit in him disliked these demonstrations as indications of inferiority complex and slave mentality. He would that everyone learnt 'to stand with his head up and back unbent before the greatest and the mightiest'. He would that each man learnt to stand up for his rights and to 'fight and not beg and petition' for them. For, he feels 'the beggar rarely gets anything but kicks and further humiliations'.

Once a young enthusiast came to him and 'begged' him for his autograph. Jawaharlal turned to him and said sharply "Why do you beg? I do not want beggars about me".

"India is a land of beggars," the young man submitted rather irrelevantly.

"It shall no longer be if you people stop begging" was the Pandit's reply.

The autograph hunter missed the autograph, but had received a good lesson instead.

* * *

EVERY INCH A GENTLEMAN

Jawaharlal is a gentleman every inch of him. Consideration for the aged, the weak and the oppressed are seen in every word and action of his.

On one occasion as he was leaving a public meeting, an aged Harijan slipped and fell in the rush of the crowd. Jawaharlal noticed this and ran to his aid and lifting him up cleared a way for him. "My sandals, my stick, I have lost them", the man wailed.

Jawaharlal picked up the stick for him and helped him to put on the sandals that some one had brought by then.

The old man's face beamed with gratitude and benediction.

The cheers of the crowd must surely have been ringing in the Pandit's ears long after he had left the town.

* * *

TWENTY HOUR DAYS

Few men could have compressed more work into twenty-four hours than did Jawaharlal every day of the fortnight that the author of this book spent with him. Few are capable of as energetic and as strenuous work as he. Covering 250 miles over narrow, dusty, ill-kept country roads and at least two dozen villages, delivering as many speeches, all except a few in the open, to crowds numbering in thousands, and working twenty hours—this is a daily average rare even among the presidents of the Indian National Congress.

For 'Congress presidents are worked hard in these days—or, perhaps it will be more correct to say, they work themselves hard. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's industry is amazing; no less amazing is the cheerfulness with which he faces all that he is called upon to do. Only a man perfectly fit in body and mind, ready in speech and firm in conviction and well equipped with knowledge can meet such heavy demands and not break down......Jawaharlal is a man of great charm. He has a smile that alone would ensure large audiences, and a dyna-

mic personality that conquers hearts and wills without effort, as if by natural right'.

WATCHING FOR THE DAWN

The dawn has rarely seen Pandit Jawaharlal in bed. This habit of early rising, he developed while in prison.

> "I like to watch," he says, "the coming of the dawn and the way it gradually puts out the stars. Have you ever seen the moonlight before the dawn and the slow change to day? Often I have watched this contest between the moonlight and the dawn in which the dawn always wins. In the strange half light it is difficult to say for some time whether it is the moonlight or the light of the coming day and then almost suddenly there is no doubt of it, and it is day, and the pale moon retires beaten from the contest."

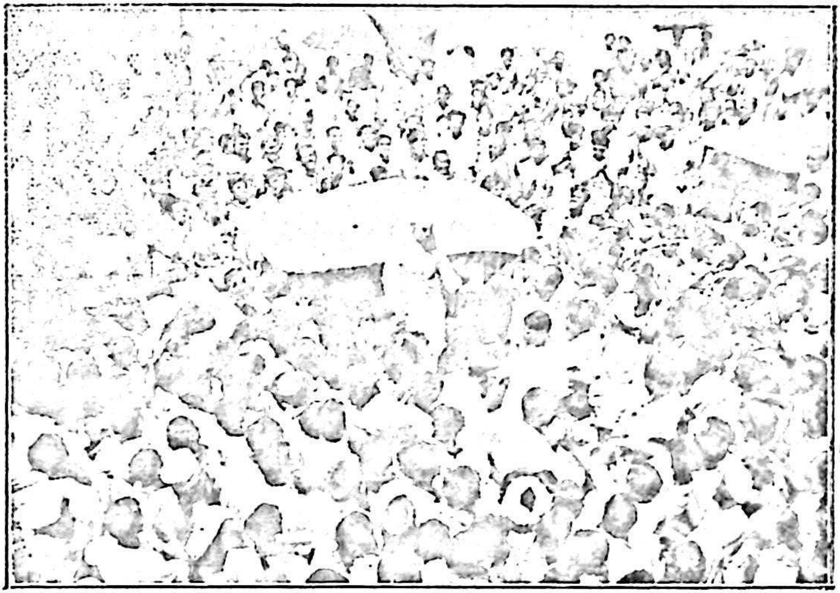
The poetry matches the allegory!

The man seems to live on work. A few sips of hot coffee, almost at boiling point, and a small slice of toasted bread after the morning bath—and he is ready for the day's work. Without a draught of water he has driven long distances till late in the afternoon before stopping for lunch which, again, was very sparingly partaken of. Another eight or ten hours of driving, speeches, getting through crowds, giving *darshan*

seated on the hood of his car or standing on its bonnet, and then to bed, generally an hour or two past midnight. He rarely would take supper after nine o'clock but would content himself with a cup of hot coffee.

UNSPARING

Amid such crowded engagements nothing annoys Jawaharlal so much as unnecessary delay and hindrances caused by



over-enthusiastic admirers or silly sentimentalists. He is as unsparing in his criti-

cism of these people as he is of those guilty of indiscipline or frivolous opposition.

Jawaharlal was driving at breakneck speed, getting hurriedly through one of the longest and heaviest programmes of the fortnight. The day was warm and the road dusty. The Pandit had started on his work at 6 a.m., and had gone on without rest or refreshment till past noon. After addressing a crowded meeting in the burning sun, he had just moved out to the road when a Congressman stood in the way of his car insisting that the Pandit should turn back and visit his village two miles away. Neither the earnest entreaties of standers-by nor even Jawaharlal's own word could move the man away from the path of the car. Worse still, he lay across the road in front of the vehicle, refusing to budge unless his request was granted.

Suddenly, the Pandit jumped out of the car, caught hold of the man and dragged him away and let the car move on. Jawaharlal administered such a chastisement to the Congressman that he shed tears of shame and remorse and apologised to the Pandit.

A SOCIALIST REBUKED

But the over-enthusiastic Socialist who interrupted the Pandit's speech on another occasion had a different and more terrible experience. The Pandit's speech was being translated when a young man, who had his differences with the translator, took exception to his rendering. No explanation or argument would convince him, and the whole gathering got annoyed with the man's behaviour. The Pandit, coming to know that he was a staunch Congressman and Socialist, admonished him and said that he should set a better example if he was to convert people to his cause. But the man persisted in his folly. The Pandit shrugged his shoulders and remarked "I have never seen a more foolish person. Will he not stop?" The Pandit had fifty more miles to cover; it was already 9 p.m., and his annoyance at this delay was great. The crowd now took up the matter. Several helpful suggestions to 'throw him out' and to 'pull him down' were made. Some attempted to handle the interrupter roughly. He would surely have been severely assaulted had not the Pandit jumped from the dais to

his rescue and prevented mischief. Jawaharlal deprecated the conduct of the audience in shouting and creating confusion and pleaded for discipline and earnest work in the national cause.

'WHO IS IT THAT HAS NO FAULT!'

Before the Pandit left the place, a companion of the interrupter asked Jawaharlal "Will you forgive this .town for this fault?".

The Pandit gave a charactreistic reply. "Who is it that has not a fault ? It is human to have faults, but it is not right to have too many".

He asked them to work with a sense of discipline and gave them this message— "Ours is a democratic organisation and it is our duty to enforce discipline in our ranks, for indiscipline in a democratic organisation will spell its ruin".

In a certain town, a group of half a dozen persons appeared like a speck on an ocean in the midst of a vast gathering listening to the Pandit, waving black flags and carrying posters with the text 'Go back, Jawaharlal.'

Interrupting himself, the Pandit said, "I notice something down there" (pointing to the part of the gathering where the

demonstrators were). "I want to know who those people are."

There was no answer and the gathering waited with interest. Pandit Nehru had repeated his question several times when a young man, clad in shirt and loose pants, stepped forward.

"Are you the man?" the Pandit asked.

"Yes," came the reply.

"Ask that man to come on to the platform," Pandit Nehru shouted to one at that end.

The young man did not move, whereupon Pandit Nehru again asked him to come forward. But he did not.

"Will you come here and tell me who you are and what you want?" the Pandit demanded.

The young man who had come forward said that he was a representative of the Depressed Classes.

"You are very depressed indeed. I am sorry to say that if you are going to put up this kind of show, your mind and your nature are depressed indeed."

The young man stood dumb. Somebody added to his confusion by shouting 'Go back Jawaharlal'. But the young man it was who

went back. He and his associates withdrew without a word.

* * *

BITING SARCASM.

Jawaharlal always has a ready wit and a devastating humour.

While the Pandit was passing from one British district to another through a small Indian State, as a 'precautionary measure' a regiment of the State army and a posse of the State police had been drawn up on the roadside. And there was a military escort provided for the Congress President till he reached the outskirts of the capital of the State.

Jawaharlal's review of the incident was full of humour and biting sarcasm.

> "Were these manoeuvres of the Army or had the international situation in Europe affected the State and preparations were being made for a coming crisis?" Jawaharlal remarked. "I was told that the Army had turned out to clear the way for me so that the crowds might not embarrass me—a very delicate compliment on the part of the State to the President of the Indian National Congress to which I was unaccustomed. I have had tremendous receptions from all manner of people, but to be escorted by an Army through streets lined with troops was a Viceregal experience which I have never had, and so I thought I had better make the best of it whilst I had the chance.........

I am grateful to the authorities for these military arrangements to welcome my passage through the territory. I understand that garlanding was specifically forbidden by the State as a dangerous revolutionary activity which might upset the whole fabric of the administration. Probably the fabric is so flimsy that any breath of wind will blow it away."

* * *

"YOU APPROVE OF YOURSELF!"

Jawaharlal was in the midst of his speech when someone interrupted. He was told that the interrupter was a member of a local reactionary political group. The Pandit asked the individual whether he was a Congressman.

"No, I do not belong to any party" was the answer.

"Nor do you approve of any party, I suppose?" the Pandit put in banteringly.

"No. I do not."

"You do not approve of anybody except yourself," pursued the Pandit, and the audience burst into a laughter.

The man was floundering. "I approve of whatever is good", he answered.

"And seeing good only in yourself, you approve of yourself and none else!", and the Pandit laughed outright.

The man sank back.

* * *

Jawaharlal's strongest point is his courage. Of physical courage he has an unlimited share and his moral courage is no less. He believes in converting and conquering opponents, but he rarely humours them, nor does he employ the 'sweet honeyed word'. His burning, fighting spirit shows through sharp and strong language, but he is rarely unsportsmanlike.

EVER SPORTSMANLY

A group of hotheads made themselves conspicuous on one occasion by staging a black flag demonstration on his entry into their town. They believed that he would drive past ignoring their demonstrations, and so they were as vociferous as they could be. But they were taken aback when the Pandit stopped his car, jumped out and rushing up to their leader, caught him by the hand which was carrying the flag and asked him what he meant. The demonstrators took to their heels, when the Pandit shouted "Why do you shout so and run away now when I ask you what your shout means? Whose agents are you?".

"We are nobody's agents. We want to protest against your being made a tool of by self-seeking individuals", one of them answered.

"If you have a grievance tell me. I will hear and see if I can meet you. But at the moment of my coming, anything done like this is an insult to the Congress and to me. I do not run from black flags or opposition," the Pandit said.

"We suspect you of playing into the hands of those opposed to Socialism," said the demonstrator feebly.

"Shut up. Suspect me, do you?" the Pandit said in a terrible voice, "I suspect you of being enemies of Indian freedom and friends of Imperialism. Fight me if you can; I will fight you."

The men were flabbergasted.

Pandit Jawaharlal gave them a chance, asked them to attend the public meeting he was to address and he allowed one of them to explain his grievances. This thoroughly sportsmanlike attitude of the Pandit struck even his opponents.

NO SENTIMENTALISM.

Jawaharlal hates sentimentalism. At a students' gathering, a young man, formally requesting him to address the meeting, referred in eulogistic terms to the Pandit's sacrifices and services in the cause of the country. No doubt, the language of the reference was such as to try even a man

with the most unlimited capacity for standing adulation. But to the refined spirit of Jawaharlal, nothing could be more repugnant. Rebuking the young man roundly for this 'sickly sentimental nonsense', he declared—and this reveals the man—that the life he had been living for several years now had its own perils and sufferings, no doubt; but it had been of his own choice. And, having tasted the intense joy which even those sufferings of this life had entailed, he would not like to exchange it for the easier one he had led at the Bar.

*   *   *

A DREAMER.

Jawaharlal stood lost in contemplation of the wonderful carvings and beautiful paintings on stone that met the eye in every part of the *mandir*. Masters of art in a bygone age of India's glory had expended all their skill in beautifying the sacred precincts of the temple. The grand sweep of the mind and the extraordinary skill of the hand behind the works would hold the lover of art spell-bound. Jawaharlal is a great lover of art and has a fine sense of the beautiful and the artistic. But these monuments of Indian craftsmanship and artistry have a deeper and more profound significance for him. The majestic *gopuras* that mark the skyline,

turn where you will in Dravidian country, the ruins of Mohenjo-daro or the grand works of Moghul art alike fascinate him and awake in him thoughts of the splendour that was Ind. In a brilliant train, the ages of India's history move before his mind's eye—as in a kaleidoscope—and he loses himself in the past and in visions of the future.

At last, with a sigh he comes back to the unhappy present.

Often, even in company, Jawaharlal can be seen with a dreamy look and an abstracted gaze, while his fingers clasp and unclasp restlessly, and his lips move as if in some silent recitation. He then apparently becomes forgetful of his neighbours and surroundings. During the pauses in the midst of his speech, when it was being translated to the audience, he would lapse into such dreamy moods. The translator, finishing his translation, would gently touch him, and with a start, Jawaharlal would come back to reality and continue his speech, from the point where he left.

THE CLARION CALL

Jawaharlal, of course, dreams great dreams and sees glorious visions. He is conscious that to thus lose oneself in the past and wander into the future—while in between

creeps a sense of unreality of the present—is a vital failing for a politician. But he feels that this helps to develop a certain perspective while not detaching one from to-day.

"We dare not escape," he says, "from to-day. We have to think of it and conquer it if we can. But still, thinking of to-day, if we think of yesterday and still more of to-morrow, to-day does not oppress us quite so much, and then, too, we get a right view, a right perspective."

India, with its great and glorious past, is slowly but surely passing into a still more glorious and greater future. But the path lies through a sad and dark—also too sad and too dark—present. The example of great patriots alone can sustain the nation, and it is their message that can lighten its path through this dark valley. And the message, like a clarion call, goes forth:

> "We worked for the dawn. But the long night has continued and it may continue—how long I don't know. Many of us now in the vanguard of the nation's fight may not live to see the dawn. But the dawn will come. Meanwhile, the torch has got to be kept burning to light the path. And I want to know how many brave arms there are amongst you to take this torch from falling hands. Be worthy of the charge."

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